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ABSTRACT

Whether the transition to primary school is smooth or abrupt for children depends on whether early childhood and elementary school programs work together to build bridges between their services. This report presents several examples of collaborative efforts to smooth the transition to school. Specifically, it describes how various elements of five transition programs are being developed in a programmatic way and carried out in practice. The five programs are: Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Projects in Santa Clara (California), Reno (Nevada), and Phoenix (Arizona) respectively; VIP (Very Important Preschoolers) Village in San Diego (California); and the Transitional Bilingual Education Program in Irvine (California). The bulk of the report describes how each program has enacted eight elements of a quality transition program. These elements are: (1) shared leadership and decision making; (2) comprehensive and integrated services for children and their families; (3) education, involvement, and empowerment of families; (4) sensitivity to home culture and home language; (5) communication; (6) joint staff development; (7) developmentally appropriate practices; and (8) program evaluation. The programs also demonstrate several additional principles involved in the transition programs: that transition activities need to be ongoing and coordinated and must focus on both families and children; that parents need to be familiar with teachers, curriculum, and their children's development and education; and that communication and collaboration among different partners, including parents, facilitate transitions between educational and service settings. The report concludes by noting that an effective transition program should support continuity which must be comprehensive and is dependent on a close partnership among preschools, families, and communities. An appendix presents a list of the program contacts. Contains 23 references. (AP)

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Transition Program Practices: Improving Linkages Between Early Childhood Education And Early Elementary School

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February 1994

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Preface

This document is one response to concerns about young children's transition to school that are shared by policymakers, educators, practitioners, and parents. The project was sponsored by two federal agencies: (a) the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) and (b) the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (Head Start).

Over the past 20 years, there have been several efforts at the national level to improve the transition from early childhood programs to early elementary school programs. The Follow Through Program, which addressed alternative ways for carrying forward children's early childhood experiences into the elementary school years, was the first major effort to perfect methods to achieve better transitions. Project Developmental Continuity, carried out during the 1970s, was another endeavor designed to examine linkages between Head Start and school programs. Recently, National Head Start has taken a comprehensive look at supporting children's transition from early childhood programs to programs in schools. The U.S. Department of Education (1991), the National Association of State Boards of Education (1991), and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (1991) also recognize the importance of building connections among parents, preschools, and elementary schools to ensure smooth and coherent transitions.

Recent efforts to implement transition practices in the Western Region exemplify and illuminate the challenges of strengthening connections among early childhood programs, school programs, families, service providers, and the community. This document describes some of the practices associated with such efforts. The authors attempt to illustrate practices, approaches, and activities being used to facilitate the transition for young children and their families. The purpose of this document is to convey some descriptive information to groups or individuals who may be interested in creating early childhood continuity through the building of home, school, and community partnerships. The intended audience includes departments of education and other state agencies, school districts, preschools, community agencies, and parents.

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Introduction

Educators, parents, and policymakers are increasingly recognizing the importance of early childhood education in the long-range success of children. Longitudinal studies of early intervention programs indicate that high-quality early childhood services help to boost children's performance in school, increase family cohesiveness, and prevent juvenile delinquency. Yet, the benefits of high-quality services for children and their families may be muted if the schools that children enter at age five fail to build on the positive experiences provided by early childhood programs. Increasing numbers of educators are recognizing the potentially harmful effects of a lack of connection between early childhood and early elementary (K-3) school programs (Bowman, 1994; U.S. Department of Education, 1993; Kagan, 1992; Epps, 1992; Love, 1992; Payzant, 1992; U.S. Department of Education, 1992; Lally, Mangione, & Honig, 1988). Whether the transition to school is abrupt or smooth for children depends on whether early childhood and elementary school programs work together to build bridges between their services. This document presents several examples of collaborative efforts in the Western Region to smooth the transition to school. These examples illustrate key elements of promising transition programs and provide insights into strategies and efforts to create linkages between early childhood and early elementary school programs.

Only recently has a comprehensive set of elements of promising transition programs been identified and defined (Early Childhood Collaboration Network, 1993). Collaborative work by 10 Regional Educational Laboratories in assisting communities to strengthen early childhood and school linkages has provided the information base for a comprehensive definition of transition practices. Using the definitions developed by the Regional Educational Laboratories as a framework, the Metropolitan Educational Trends and Research Outcomes (METRO) Center at Southwest Regional Laboratory, in collaboration with Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, initiated a study of transition programs in the Western Region. As a result, the study identified five programs in the Western Region that exhibit a wide array of effective transition practices. There is general consensus among experts on early childhood education (e.g., Kagan [1992] and Bowman [1994]), as to what constitutes an appropriate and exemplary practice in theory. Many of these concerns often are not addressed in the actual transition of children from preschool to elementary schools (Love & Logue, 1992), and few states have produced reports to disseminate information and hence encourage school districts to address this

problem. One state that has done so is California whose Department of Education's publications, *Here They Come, Ready or Not* (California Department of Education, 1987) and *It's Elementary* (1992), call for continuity and articulation of early childhood programs and early elementary school programs. The transition programs described here are attempting to implement practices such as those described in the aforementioned publications.

The purpose of this report is to describe how various elements of five transition programs are being developed in a programmatic way and carried out in practice. This report aims to illustrate practices by way of examples, not to survey or investigate them systematically. It is an inventory of some specific approaches and program components in the region that may be of interest to practitioners and researchers who are concerned with improving the lives of young children.

Data Collection

To identify transition programs, we sent a letter stating the goals of this study to county superintendents in the Western Region—Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah. A similar letter also was sent to the superintendents of the largest school districts in California. The letter expressed an interest in receiving documentation on school districts' transition programs or input with regard to identifying or nominating promising transition programs, practices, or curricula that effectively link early childhood and early elementary school programs. Programs are considered promising if the practices that districts implemented improve the connection between preschool and elementary school and smooth the transition to school for children and families. Information on these programs represents an important addition to the current knowledge base on early childhood and early elementary school education services.

The letter further detailed the types of information that would help in examining transition practices. While it was not expected that any program would fully delineate the degree to which activities are carried out or which data are fully available, the listing was intended to guide the superintendents' responses. The information sought was divided into categories such as program features, program communication and collaboration, instructional activities, parental involvement efforts and support, and supporting components including staff development, with each category further itemized.

Follow-up telephone calls to the county and district offices were made, and we identified and received information on five transition programs in the Western Region. We sent a preliminary version of this document to the transition program directors, and they provided us with feedback and comments. It was then further revised by incorporating the comments and feedback. It is important to recognize that some of these programs are at an early stage, with documentation on their practices still in a preliminary stage, and that data are not available to assess on how closely these programs are following the goals stated in their documents.

Although this number seems small, one also should note that, while there are many excellent programs at the preschool and elementary school level, and the importance of the idea of transition activities is generally recognized, the formalization of a transition program in many counties or districts is either nonexistent or at a preliminary stage. Indeed, the recently concluded National Transition Study by the RMC Research Corporation (Love & Logue, 1992) found that only 13% of the schools in the country have formally recognized

the need for transition activities. It is yet another major step to implement local transition activities and eventually develop districtwide or countywide transition programs.

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Criteria for Transition Programs

Although there is no universal agreement on a precise set of criteria, a brief examination of the current literature on transition gives an overview of what are generally believed to be successful transition practices. It is clear that, although successful transition programs that bridge preschool and kindergarten are not sufficient in themselves to promote educational progress in children, continuity from one program to the other is a fundamental concern. Continuity is not just restricted to cognitive, instructional, and curricular issues. It also involves affective, psychological, family, and cultural considerations. Kagan (1992) describes two types of continuity—horizontal continuity and vertical continuity. Horizontal continuity refers to the different settings such as families, schools, and communities, in which a young child receives care and education at any point in time. Vertical continuity refers to the amount of linkage among different settings across time and development. Both of these kinds of continuity are important. Continuity, implemented comprehensively, establishes conditions that foster the development and well-being of the child throughout the early childhood and early primary school years.

Many authors and publications have examined the multifaceted nature of continuity in the lives of young children. The Early Childhood Initiatives in Oregon (McClanahan, 1992) stress the continuity of philosophy, pedagogy, and structure as the key to readiness: "Children ready for school and school ready for children." Lombardi (1992) emphasizes that the three key elements toward continuity are developmentally appropriate practices, parent involvement, and supportive services for children and families. The *Position Statement on School Readiness*, adopted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in July 1990, states that "successful intervention efforts" have several key elements: comprehensive services to ensure individual needs, parental roles as first teachers, and firsthand learning experiences for children. The Bridging Early Services Transition Project (Rosenkoetter, 1993) is an outreach project sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. It identified six aspects of a good transition: preplanning, communication, shared information and trust, empowering of parents, least restrictive environment, and evaluation. *Easing the Transition From Preschool to Kindergarten*, a guide from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1990) for early childhood teachers and administrators, lists the keys to a successful transition. They include program continuity through developmentally appropriate curricula, ongoing communication, preparing children for transition, and parent involvement. The phrasing of the key ideas

may be different, but the general agreement is noteworthy. A refinement of this general framework into more specific criteria is being carried out by different researchers.

In this report, the general framework for reviewing identified transition programs was developed by a collaborative group of 10 regional educational laboratories (RELs). A final working document of the collaborative work by the 10 RELs (Early Childhood Collaboration Network, 1993) identifies the following eight elements as critical in ensuring smooth transitions and providing continuity for children and their families:

1. Continuity for children from birth through age eight and their families is facilitated by home, school, and community partners sharing leadership and responsibility for decisionmaking—shared leadership and decisionmaking.

2. Continuity for children from birth through age eight and their families is facilitated by a continuum of comprehensive and integrated services—comprehensive and integrated services for children and their families.

3. Continuity for children from birth through age eight and their families is facilitated by policies, practices, and programs that demonstrate the education, involvement, and empowerment of families—education, involvement, and empowerment of families.

4. Continuity for children from birth through age eight and their families is facilitated by policies, programs, and practices that demonstrate sensitivity to the home culture and home language of children and their families—sensitivity to home culture and home language.

5. Continuity for children from birth through age eight and their families is facilitated by ongoing communication among all adults who are responsible for the children's care and education—communication.

6. Continuity for children from birth through age eight and their families is facilitated by a coordinated approach to staff development across agencies to enhance implementation of home, school, and community linkages—joint staff development.

7. Continuity for children from birth through age eight and their families is facilitated by developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive curriculum, instruction, and assessment—developmentally appropriate practices.

8. Continuity for children from birth through age eight and their families is facilitated by documentation and reporting of processes, operations, and outcomes that are used to refine and/or expand home, school, and community linkages—evaluation.

A set of indicators defines each of these elements. We will use features of the five programs identified to illustrate how the eight elements are reflected in practice. A description of each of the five programs precedes the review of the eight elements.

Transition Programs

The National Transition Study (Love & Logue, 1992) drew a major implication for early childhood program policies and practices that "there is no single way to implement transition activities that will be appropriate for all schools" (p. 6). The basic reason is that we live in a pluralistic society. Children from different cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic situations come to school with varied experiences. School districts with different demographic profiles may decide to use their limited resources in their transition efforts differently. Hence, the scope of a transition program could be at a school, school district, or intermediate education agency level. The five programs described herein—Santa Clara, South Bay, Southwest, Irvine, and Reno—illustrate some of these factors at work. The Reno program cuts across two counties in Nevada. The Santa Clara program is an effort at the county level. The Southwest program is a combined effort of three geographically contiguous school districts in a metropolitan area. The South Bay and Irvine programs are districtwide programs with different characteristics. The description of each program focuses first on its goals, followed by a brief demographic summary and other key information. Under each of the eight transition elements, details about these programs are delineated.

Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Project—Santa Clara

The Head Start Transition Project of the Santa Clara County Office of Education, San Jose, CA, is part of the research and demonstration project created by the U.S. Congress in 1990 to study whether the provision of continuous and comprehensive services, developmentally appropriate curricula, and parent involvement will "sustain the gains" of Head Start children after they leave Head Start. The Santa Clara program is one of 32 National Demonstration Projects funded by the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF) through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The objectives of the program are to (a) maintain the early benefits of Head Start preschool participation among kindergartners through third graders; (b) increase parent involvement in children's education in the school and home; (c) ensure that the basic needs of low-income children and their families are met in order to maximize their potential for success in education and later life; and (d) empower families and help improve the quality of their lives. Two

schools in the Franklin-McKinley Elementary School District, San Jose, CA, were designated as transition schools. They are located in areas of urban poverty, with all the attendant problems associated with such neighborhoods, including crowded housing conditions and unwanted mobility. Many of the residents are immigrants from Mexico, Central and South America, Vietnam, Cambodia, and other Southeast Asian countries. The ethnic distribution is 72% Hispanic, 23% Asian, 2% Black, 1% White, 1% Native American, and 1% others. Many parents speak little or no English. Significant numbers of these students have little or no proficiency in English and have cultural backgrounds with beliefs, values, and attitudes different from the dominant culture.

The Santa Clara County Office of Education has extensive experience with transition programs, having conducted an earlier transition project (1987-1989), which was funded by the Head Start Bureau of the ACYF, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This project focused on the "desirability of facilitating the entry of *all* children into elementary school," not just those with preschool experience. A manual detailing the experience from this project is available from the Santa Clara County Office of Education. The current project can be regarded as a continuation of the 1989 project, a collaborative effort with the Franklin-McKinley Elementary School District.

VIP (Very Important Preschoolers) Village—South Bay

The VIP Village, in South Bay Union School District, which serves Imperial Beach and South San Diego, CA, believes that the partnership between families and school is one of the key concepts in a successful transition between early childhood programs and the elementary school. The district believes early childhood education programs must promote and enhance potential, as well as recognize and support families, languages, and cultures of preschool students. Program goals include: (a) providing age-appropriate activities that meet the developmental, cultural, and linguistic needs of each child; (b) supporting the "whole child" through activities that allow creative exploration and development of cognitive, social, physical, and language skills; (c) fostering readiness skills necessary for future success; and (d) promoting self-concept and sensitivity to a variety of cultures and values.

South Bay Union School District's population falls into the lowest quartile socioeconomically in the state of California, with 18% on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and 57% below the poverty level. Sixty-eight percent of the population are ethnic minorities with the majority being Hispanic. The second largest minority group

consists of Filipinos. Overall, more than 30% of the students in the district are limited or non-English speaking.

South Bay has a successful history of over 25 years in child development programs. Beginning in 1967, Unruh Preschool served over 150 children and their families. As funds diminished, the district demonstrated a strong commitment to early childhood education by funding additional preschool classes out of its general fund. South Bay serves approximately 500 children, ages 3-5, with 18 state-funded, 2 district-funded, and 4 special education classes located at the VIP Village. This program has served as an exemplary model for early childhood education, with over 300 visitors each year to see preschool technology, articulation/transition practices, curriculum assessment, primary language instruction, and mainstreaming practices.

Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Project—Southwest

The Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Project, Southwest Human Development, Phoenix, AZ, is one of the 32 National Demonstration Projects funded by the ACYF, Department of Health and Human Services. The principal objectives of the project are to: (a) develop collaborative strategies that facilitate the smooth transition of Head Start children and their families into the public school kindergarten and primary grades, while providing continuous and comprehensive services; (b) determine whether these services will maintain the earlier benefits gained by the children and families; and (c) determine the impact of Head Start services as extended into the first four years (K-3) of public schools.

The Southwest Transition Demonstration Project is a consortium of three geographically contiguous elementary school districts: Balsz, Creighton, and Osborn, all located in Phoenix. The neighborhoods served suffer from numerous problems associated with low-income areas. The ethnic distribution of students in the three districts is 34% Hispanic, 9% Black, 7% Native American, 2% Asian, 47% Anglo, and 1% other. In the three selected schools—David Crockett School, William T. Machan School, and Encanto School—86% of the students in Crockett, 83% of the students in Machan, and 75% of the students in Encanto receive free and/or reduced lunch.

The Southwest program serves children who leave Southwest Head Start in 1992 and 1993 and enter selected kindergartens at Crockett (Balsz School District), Machan (Creighton School District), and Encanto (Osborn School District) schools. Approximately 220 children and their families were enrolled in the transition kindergarten classes during

1992-93 with another 220 expected for 1993-94. The Southwest program's approach is multipronged, interdisciplinary, comprehensive, and family oriented. It provides for extensive family services such as a family focused case management system and accessible family literacy programs. Thus, this program includes provisions for comprehensive services to support and assist families who are at risk, not just the children at risk.

Transitional Bilingual Education Program—Irvine

The Transitional Bilingual Education Program, in its fifth year of operation, is a Title VII program of the Irvine Unified School District, Irvine, CA. This early intervention program is designed to prevent school failure with the aim of providing a solution to the problems caused by late identification of developmental levels, learning styles, and special needs. It is a program for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old Hispanic, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese children, as well as other ethnic minorities. Its program is "material rich" and cogniüvely oriented. Irvine is one of the nation's largest master-planned urban communities, with also one of the highest family incomes. The population includes 87% White, 3% Hispanic, 1.5% Black, 2% Japanese, 2% Chinese, and 3% other Asian.

The program orientation is influenced by the high level of education of Irvine's residents. Thirty percent of the residents have completed one to three years of college, while another 45% have completed four or more years of college. A number of the language minority children has parents who are highly educated immigrants, visitors to this country, or postgraduate students. An English as a second language (ESL)/sheltered English magnet program is located at University Park Elementary School in Irvine.

Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Project—Reno

The Head Start Transition Demonstration Project is managed by the Community Services Agency (CSA), a private, nonprofit organization headquartered in Reno, NV. CSA is a corporation with a broad charter, created solely for educational purposes and for the advancement of civic, economic, urban, and rural activities and interests. The CSA's mission is to improve the capabilities of individuals and groups affected by poverty or other impairment to gain the services, skills, and knowledge to deal effectively with their problems so that they can become economically self-sufficient. This transition project is designed to provide Head Start children and their families continuity as they move from the

Head Start program into the public schools. Four schools in the Washoe County and two schools in the Churchill County are participating in the project.

The Reno program serves children from poor families and single parent households. The Head Start children in Carson City School District and in Churchill County are comprised of 14.12% minorities and 19.26% minorities, respectively. The Hispanic population is the largest and fastest growing minority population. The Asian and Pacific Islander population also is increasing rapidly as many Asian refugees are moving into the more urban Washoe and Carson City areas. The Head Start program is concerned with helping single parents address the child care problem and health care needs because the majority of low-income families do not have health care coverage. The goals of the project are to empower families to deal better with the economic and social conditions, to become an active part of their children's educational process and development, and to provide continuity as much as possible to children and their families.

Summary

As the issue of children's "readiness" to enter kindergarten and first grade has gained increasing national prominence, transition programs to ensure the success of children are emerging. While each of the five programs differs slightly in its orientation and emphasis, each can serve as a source for reflection on transition practices.

Following is information, provided by the five programs, on how the eight elements for effective transition are reflected in practice. The description is based solely on information provided by each program. No site visits or formal interviews have been conducted to gather additional information. In the following discussion, omission of a particular program does not indicate a deficiency in its practices. Rather, it could indicate lack of information. The five programs will be referred to as Irvine, Santa Clara, Southwest, South Bay, and Reno.

Shared Leadership and Decisionmaking

A multidimensional project involving a variety of participants such as the current transition efforts can succeed only if everyone has a stake in its outcome and shares in its governance. The criteria for this element are: (a) home, school, and community partners share responsibilities and leadership, and participate in decisionmaking about policy, program, and practice through a collaborative process to ensure the success of the transition process; (b) a formal organizational structure exists to establish and maintain this process; and (c) clearly agreed goals and objectives provide the vision and ensure smooth operation. The Santa Clara, South Bay, Southwest, and Reno programs conform to these criteria.

Santa Clara

The Santa Clara program is overseen by the Transition Project Governing Board, a decisionmaking body that brings together representatives of the Head Start program, the school district, community agencies, and parents. Consistent with the federal guidelines for the Transition Project, Governing Board membership comprises a minimum of 51% parents. Parents also have regular input into project activities through participation on Parent Committees at each school site. These committees help determine parent education priorities, plan holiday celebrations and other events, and identify unmet needs and issues.

The Santa Clara program has developed and established a Transition Team at all the schools and their "feeder" Head Start centers. The Transition Team, which is composed of school principals, teachers, nurses, Transition Project staff, and "feeder" Head Start staff, shares information and engages in joint planning meetings to develop effective transition approaches. The Transition project director supervises the data coordinator, project secretary, and family service supervisor who, in turn, supervises the work of six family advocates who are all bilingual: Four speak Spanish, one speaks Cambodian, and one speaks Vietnamese. Family advocates serve as a link among the project, Transition Project families, and classroom teachers.

Southwest

A Transition Advisory Council oversees the Southwest Transition Project. The council is composed of parents, community representatives, principals, and a representative from each of three participating school district offices (Balsz, Creighton, and Osborn districts).

The representation of parents on this council is set at 51%. The Head Start director, transition manager, and Head Start family service managers are ad-hoc members of the council. Each district has its own Transition Team. These teams have thus far included the transition manager, principals and other school personnel, kindergarten and first-grade teachers, Head Start education managers and family advocates, and Head Start teachers and assistants.

Parents have been added to each of the Transition Teams. One of the program's major goals is to involve the parents in the decisionmaking process—both for the project and for their elementary school. In fact, the family advocates continually seek effective strategies to involve parents at all levels.

The Southwest project also is supported by advisory committees, including the Evaluation Advisory Committee, the Mental Health Advisory Committee, and the Health Services Advisory Committee. The latter includes pediatricians, a dentist, a social worker, a psychologist, a nutritionist, and parents. Southwest ensures that all participants in the Transition Project are full partners. In addition, this structure is coupled with other groups in the community to provide maximum communication and collaboration beyond the project boundaries. For example, the Head Start staff and the Transition staff work with the Arizona Coalition for Tomorrow (a consortium of local businesses, health providers, and the media) to implement a health fair that provides complete physical and dental screening and examinations and immunizations for Head Start and Transition children, as well as their siblings.

South Bay

In the South Bay program, a Parent Advisory Committee participates annually in the evaluation of the program goals, objectives, and activities. It does not seem at this initial stage that integration of parents into a more broadly based committee is in progress. However, as South Bay is evolving its program, it may be moving toward a model such as Santa Clara's.

Reno

The Reno program is based on the idea of creating partnerships with three structures representing the main partnerships of the Transition project. The three formal partnership structures are the school-based Transition Teams, the Project Management Team, and the Principals Team. The main characteristics of these partnerships include a planning process

that emphasizes proactive strategies rather than crisis management, removal of barriers to other program components such as parental involvement, development of a shared vision and an action plan, implementation of policies such as agreements with other services, and documentation of essential information for all partners.

The School-based Transition Teams consist of school personnel, the principal, a Head Start teacher, parents, evaluators, the project director, and the family service coordinator. The plans and actions of this group remain fluid and are site-specific. Its goal is to allow transition staff members to phase themselves out gradually with a plan of regular professional support at the local site. An equally important goal is the active participation of parents in decisions regarding all facets of transition activities. The team building workshop, Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum, and a plan for professional support are seen as important steps in achieving these goals.

The Project Management Team consists of key decisionmakers and representatives of the various agencies or organizations involved in the collaborative efforts. The Principals Team consists of principals of the schools in the project. The team serves as a support group for principals, as well as an advisory group to the transition teams and project staff. The goals and visions for the last two partnerships are continually evolving. Although they currently are not defined, mechanisms have been set up by the Reno program to foster regular and open communication among all the parties.

Summary

It appears that both Santa Clara and Southwest have implemented the criteria for home, school, and community partnerships. Southwest is an excellent model if parental involvement is believed to be the primary key to success in the transition process. Parents are encouraged to get involved at all levels. An organizational structure at Southwest guarantees that parents will continue to play a pivotal role in the Transition Project. Reno has an organizational structure for family, school, and community partners to share leadership and responsibilities for decisionmaking. These programs are at different stages of developing community partnerships, and it is too early to draw conclusions regarding their success or failure.

Comprehensive and Integrated Services for Children And Their Families

Transition from early childhood special education programs to public-school kindergartens presents a host of problems for families with young children (Fowler, Schwartz, & Atwater, October-November 1991), especially for at-risk families. It is generally agreed that comprehensive and integrated services for children and their families are desirable. However, a fully developed continuum of services includes health, social services, nutrition, and transportation, and no transition program can duplicate or provide all these services. Often, some or all of these services are provided by other agencies or entities in the county, city, or even within a school district. Thus, in cases where special familial problems are present, the pertinent information should be communicated and assistance should be provided to address the problem.

The criteria for this element are: (a) all children and their families, including those with special needs, have equal opportunity to receive appropriate services that are integrated, coordinated, and comprehensive; (b) a system is in place for school staff to obtain and act on information about the needs of children and families; (c) interagency collaboration for community service is available throughout the preschool and elementary years; and (d) families are partners in planning the services designed to meet their individual needs. The Santa Clara and Southwest programs have extensive plans to implement these criteria. South Bay, being a school districtwide program, has a less comprehensive plan. Irvine does not have this component. Reno recognizes these needs, but is at a preliminary stage of addressing them.

Irvine

Providing comprehensive and integrated services to children and their families is not one of Irvine's priorities because the primary interest of the program is in the cognitive development of the incoming students to kindergarten. Many of the children do not come from Head Start programs and from low-income families. Thus, the district provides special assistance to children and their families as the need arises.

Santa Clara

Santa Clara's major project goal is improving the health of children and their families through education, preventive care, and linkage to health care providers. To this end, parent meetings provide education on various topics, including child development, preventive health and nutritional practices, accident prevention, and substance abuse. Family Advocates work with parents to access the district health clinic, dental clinic, and mental health center, and arrange for immunization of their children. School nurses help make referrals to other providers and coordinate needed services. If necessary, families receive assistance in securing food through Women, Infant, Children (WIC), food stamps, and food banks to ensure adequate nutrition for the children and their families.

A similar approach is adopted for social service needs of families through direct service provision, coordination with local service providers, and referrals. Family Advocates work directly with families to identify their needs and help them locate and obtain needed resources. Although the project intends to help families with all their social service and health-related needs, particular attention is devoted to the special needs of children, such as child abuse and neglect education, substance abuse education, child care, and after-school programs.

Family Advocates also help families in locating assistance in other basic needs such as clothing, transportation, and housing needs. Santa Clara has established an exceptional Children's Services Department where many of these services can be coordinated with other agencies. An example is the Regional Office of Child Care (formerly the School-Age Child Care Office) administered by the Santa Clara County Office of Education. Over 300 children receive child care at 10 sites in three Santa Clara County school districts.

Southwest

The Southwest program is similar to the Santa Clara program in its approach to family support services. A family services manager position has been established to supervise the Transition Family Advocates. A list of responsibilities of the Family Advocates has been specified. The emphasis is on establishing a long-term relationship of "trust and respect" with the families. The program employs a family focused management model that builds on family strengths and involves families in setting their own goals for improvement and action. Each family meets with its Family Advocate to complete a family needs and interest

survey, which includes the social, medical, dental, nutritional, employment, training, and housing needs of the family.

South Bay

The South Bay program places much emphasis in providing integrated services to children and their families. The program includes support service goals and objectives in order to use all district, community, and county services and personnel to meet the mental, physical, and emotional needs of the children and their families.

The South Bay program provides families with social services, both on campus and through interagency agreements with community agencies. An interagency committee that includes 25 public and private social and health agencies coordinates these efforts. These services are available to all preschoolers, including children with special needs. Through cooperative interagency agreements, the following are provided to children and families: preschool physicals given by the medical staff of a local community clinic; crisis counseling; and TB, psychological, speech and language, and hearing and vision testing. Social services provided to preschool parents at other school sites include the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) clothing room, immunization clinics, Shoe Fund, and Project DARE (Drug and Alcohol Resistance Education).

In addition, district-funded parent coordinators are available at each school, and a full-time support service facilitator works with the district. This facilitator assists families in need of referral to various community health care and social service resources/agencies, offers parenting classes and counseling, and coordinates an annual "Help for the Asking" Resource Fair for all parents. A parent booklet and list of community and district services are updated annually and distributed to all district families.

This network of support emphasizes to families the importance that South Bay places on the health and development of the whole child, and the district's commitment to working in partnership with parents and the community to ensure that children are well-equipped mentally and physically.

Reno

The Reno program provides its Head Start children with a comprehensive health services program that includes medical, dental, mental health, immunization, and nutritional services. Follow-up treatment, dental care, and psychological services also are provided, and nutrition education is provided to children, staff, and parents. Head Start's social

services help the family improve the quality of life. Serving as advocates, the staff members identify the social service needs of Head Start families and work with other community agencies to meet those needs. Parents are informed about the community resources, services, and facilities.

The Reno program also recognizes the particularly difficult health care problems faced by Northern Nevadans. Health costs are extremely high, partly due to abnormally high rates of cancer, heart disease, alcoholism, and other chronic conditions, and partly due to the remoteness and inaccessibility of health care in many parts of the state. For example, Nevada is second among states for the number of alcohol-related deaths. In addition, Nevada's system of countywide school districts results in a less personal system to address the problems of neighborhood elementary schools. Comprehensive and integrated services for children and their families are limited at this time.

Summary

An extensive program to provide comprehensive and integrated services for children and their families is not only desirable but possible for well-funded programs such as the Santa Clara and Southwest programs. In Reno, the local communities' sparse health care and social services make the goal of comprehensive services for children and their families a rather distant possibility at this time. Nevertheless, comprehensive and integrated services are being developed as part of the project. To establish and maintain comprehensive services, written policies should formalize the roles and responsibilities of preschools, schools, and other service providers. In addition, families should be involved in the development of individualized service plans.

Because of the extensive scope and goals of each of these projects and the relatively early stages of their development, they have yet to achieve full implementation of family support services. However, each of the programs has made noteworthy progress.

Education, Involvement, and Empowerment of Families

Children learn best in a supportive and enriching environment both at home and in school. To ensure that this fundamental condition is met, there must be continuity between the home and school environments. A corollary is that cultural sensitivity must be a cornerstone of the program. Another equally important corollary is that the education, involvement, and empowerment of their parents are critical to the success of any transition program. This statement is especially true for low-income and immigrant families.

The criteria for this element are: (a) families have an opportunity to receive and share information about their child's education; (b) families participate in training and education to empower them as partners in the development of their child and healthy functioning of their family; (c) a system is in place that encourages families to participate as full partners in the educational process and in the activities, programs, practices, and procedures that affect the care and education of their children; and (d) a climate exists that reflects mutual respect, trust, inclusion, and support among all partners.

Many of the five programs' practices for achieving these goals are interwoven throughout every facet of their programs. The steps taken depend on the resources available and the demographic profile of communities served. In the relatively stable and affluent environment experienced by the children in the Irvine program, the need for an elaborate support system is minimal. Each case is treated as the situation arises, and Irvine has decided to devote its resources to establish an outstanding developmental program for children with an emphasis on cognition and learning. For example, the program has instituted a vigorous and extensive classroom training program for its bilingual teachers and staff.

Southwest has taken a long-term, family centered approach because it believes that transition stretches beyond the entry period from preschool to kindergarten into the elementary school years.

Reno considers the parents as the foundation of the entire project. All the programs realize that a family under great stress or a family with functionally illiterate adults can easily diminish or undo the benefits of the appropriate transition practices.

In the programs with a significant number of minority students from low-income families or families of immigrants, substantial resources and planning have gone into empowering these families. It is clear throughout this document that Santa Clara, Southwest, South Bay, and Reno have instituted many measures to involve, educate, and

empower the families. Family Advocates and Family Service Coordinators connect with the families directly at their home and address whatever problem may arise. Parents constitute an integral part of committees that impact on the education of their children. Parents are encouraged to participate in decisionmaking processes and empowered to exercise leadership roles. Because all these four programs are similar in their approaches to empowering families, Reno is used as an example, rather than giving similar accounts for each program.

Reno's vision for parental involvement means "connection with every component of the program." The first phase is to change the perception of both the parents and schools as to the role of parents. For example, parents will be involved in meetings where "once only professionals attended." Schools will be urged to redefine their concepts of parental involvement to include increased flexibility and accommodation of parents' needs and work schedules. Parents are encouraged to be mentors, teachers, and leaders in classrooms. Support groups for parents are established. A Library Resource Center for parents is equipped and furnished with supplies. ESL and literacy centers for parents also are established. If particular parents are not ready to participate fully, basic survival and foundation activities will initiate these parents. The Reno project is fully cognizant of the evolutionary nature of this approach as it tries to empower the parents and change the schools so that full partnership is achieved.

Summary

The programs at Santa Clara, South Bay, Southwest, and Reno all recognize the importance of strengthening the entire family, and they appear to make every effort to do so. They provide families with opportunities to receive and share information. The approach in each program may differ in its detailed implementation due to the local availability of resources and organizational structure, but the overall goal is similar. It seems that significant steps have been taken toward the education, involvement, and empowerment of families.

Sensitivity to Home Culture and Home Language

Transition from preschool to kindergarten is a critical period for children. This is especially true for children of a different home culture and language. Often their primary language is not English, and they hold beliefs, values, and attitudes quite distinct from the dominant culture. Hence, program activities that reflect a sensitivity to the culture and language of the child and family will be of great importance to any transition effort. A number of practices to achieve this objective comes to mind. The criteria for this element are: (a) through collaboration with families, home culture and home language is reflected in curricular, material, and activities on a continuous basis; (b) polices promote the use of the child's home culture and home language; (c) communication with families occurs in culturally appropriate interaction and language; and (d) ongoing and integrated staff development focuses on the home culture and language of the children.

The five programs' goals and objectives on cultural sensitivity, and the policy, plans, and practices are so similar that little distinction can be found among them. The only discernible differences are found in their current stage of implementation and development. A number of culturally appropriate practices is addressed in the following sections of this report: Developmentally Appropriate Practice, Comprehensive and Integrated Services for Children and Their Families, and Joint Staff Development. We provide some of the practices described in the aforementioned sections here for emphasis. In the Irvine program, the teachers are not only bilingual, but significant numbers of them are of the same ethnic background as the children in the classroom. This not only ensures cultural sensitivity and language facility, but also gives children important role models. In the Reno program, teachers and staff are provided with extensive training on topics such as cultural sensitivity, cross-cultural competence, intercultural effectiveness, and ethnic competence.

In the other programs, many of the teachers also are bilingual, although not necessarily of the same ethnic background as the children. In addition, the presence of Family Advocates or Family Service Coordinators who speak the home language ensures that communication with the parents is in their own languages. Parents are encouraged to be part of the decisionmaking process so that different cultural perspectives can surface. In the Southwest, Reno, and Santa Clara programs, parents' representation on the Advisory Council, which oversees the entire transition project, is guaranteed to be at least 51%. In these programs, sensitivity to home culture and home language is not only a goal, but is an objective that has been implemented.

Summary

Sensitivity to home culture and home language is of paramount importance to these programs. Their goals and objectives on cultural sensitivity, and the policy, plans, and practices are similar to each other, and each program strives to provide a culturally sensitive curriculum and activities to enhance the learning and well-being of the children. Children are encouraged to use home language, and communication with families occur in their home language. Teachers and family advocates work together with the families. The sensitivity to the home culture and the use of the home language provide greater continuity.

Communication

A child's success in transition also depends on ongoing communication and collaboration among all adults who are responsible for the child's care and education. All adults responsible for the care and education of children should be familiar with each other's services, activities, and programs. It is important that families participate in planning and implementing transition activities. Regular workshops on various transition activities for staff and parents would lead to greater understanding and appreciation. Good record keeping and record sharing would allow continuity of instruction and address special needs in a timely fashion.

The criteria for this element are: (a) the staff within grades and across programs work together to assess, understand, and plan for a child's needs—together they can identify commonalities and promote continuity; (b) administrators, staff, and families are familiar with each other's services, activities, and programs; (c) parents are treated as full partners in their child's transition and are able to participate in planning, volunteer in classroom instruction, and communicate openly and freely with the teacher; and (d) children participate in transition activities prior to their enrollment to ease into their new learning environments. Activities such as home visits by teachers and visits to classes by parents would reassure the family and child and inform the teachers in regard to each child's strengths and needs. All five programs advocate these criteria.

Irvine

In the Irvine program, children's progress in all areas of their development is evaluated daily by their teachers. A summary of that progress is given to their parents in a "Pupil Progress Report" each semester. The teacher meets with the parents in the classroom and reviews the child's progress. These interviews are conducted by bilingual staff who speak the parents' language. The Pupil Progress Report was based on a careful study of the literature on assessment and pupil progress reports collected from both public and private school programs.

Santa Clara

The Santa Clara project has implemented many practices that support communication among parents, teachers, and other service providers. School and transition staff attend

Head Start parent meetings to discuss enrollment issues, offer suggestions regarding how parents can support their children in the transition to elementary school, and answer any questions parents have. In addition, parents and kindergarten teachers complete transition plans (these are forwarded to first-grade teachers), and teachers meet with parents to offer tips on helping their children succeed in school.

The Santa Clara program offers numerous transition activities for Head Start children, including a visit to the kindergarten classroom, a visit to Head Start from a kindergarten teacher, a visit to the kindergarten classroom as a class (parents are encouraged to accompany children), and plans developed jointly by Head Start teachers and parents. Head Start teachers visit the kindergartens and report what they learned to the children. Transition activities for kindergartners moving into first grade roughly parallel the Head Start-to-kindergarten activities. Transition of children with special needs is addressed through meetings with the Head Start psychologist and the district's coordinator of special services.

Recognizing that parents are children's "first and most important teacher," Santa Clara implemented a variety of programs to enhance parents' abilities to support their children's education. Family Literacy and Family Math programs help parents to work with their children on pre- and early-academic skills. A "Parent Place" for workshops and parent education activities (e.g., Family Literacy, Family Math, ESL, parenting, adult/education/job training, job skills), parent support groups, and a parent drop-in center have been created in the project schools.

One of the project's major goals consists of parent involvement and empowerment through classroom participation. Linkage of Head Start parents with the school PTA and parent councils has been established with representation on the Transition Governing Board. Specific activities are too numerous to list, but the commitment to achieve full partnership with the parents can be inferred from the following statement in a Santa Clara transition document: "Parents are coached in how to be an advocate for their children through their active participation."

Southwest

According to the Southwest program's philosophical foundation, the child is an inseparable part of the family. To put this program into practice, extensive planning, communication, and collaboration have been implemented. A planning committee consisting of the Head Start director, a representative from each of the three districts, and the transition manager

was formed. One of the activities was an orientation to present information to the community with legislators, community leaders, school principals and teachers, Head Start personnel, and parents among the attendees. A new job title of "transition family advocate" was created. With typical case loads of 35-40 families, the Family Advocates provide a link among the school, home, and community service providers.

Specific activities initiated by the Southwest program are too numerous to list. However, they include sharing of information about each other's programs and mutual visits between kindergarten and Head Start programs. These visits are further enhanced by transition activities such as writing, reading, and discussing the impending or past visits. Procedures for the efficient transfer of records have been implemented. Cooperative decisionmaking by kindergarten and Head Start teachers about best class placement for preschool children is standard practice. Involvement of parents in the transition process comes at meetings attended by principals, kindergarten teachers, and parents. Registration for kindergarten is facilitated by having a special registration time and providing volunteers to help Spanish-speaking families with the forms. Field trips for the parents to visit the kindergarten classrooms are provided.

The Family Advocates play a central role in communication. They facilitate communication between the family and school with regular home visits to recruit parents as volunteers at school, and to match parents' skills, talents, and availability to the needs of the teacher. Family Advocates also work with the classroom teacher, plan and implement a family involvement program, and organize parent education classes, home activities for children, and family decisionmaking at school. Family Advocates remain with the same families throughout their children's primary years. Thus, they are a critical element in the program's effort to achieve a full partnership with the parents.

South Bay

The South Bay program recognizes the importance of the role of the parents and family in each child's school experience. This partnership with parents begins at the preschool level and continues throughout the family's experience with the South Bay Union School District. Parent education, which is based on an annual assessment, is offered each year, and active parent participation in the classroom is advocated, beginning at the VIP Village. Representative parents from the VIP Village also serve on the District Advisory Committee, Bilingual Advisory Committee, and District curriculum committees. "Getting

Ready for Kindergarten" parent programs are offered not only to VIP Village families, but also to families of children attending private community preschools.

South Bay's partnership with parents begins at an orientation meeting held prior to the start of preschool. Complete program information, goals and objectives, philosophy, and classroom activities are discussed. A *Parent Handbook* in Spanish and English is given to all parents at the time of enrollment. Individual parent interest and needs surveys are completed at the orientation meeting to assist staff in planning volunteer activities that use the strengths and interest of the preschool parents. The Parenting Classes/Parent Education Component of the parent involvement program, such as Nutrition, Positive Parenting, Oral Language Development, Preschool Curriculum, and Parents as Partners in Education, are established in response to the family/parent needs assessment and with input from the Parent Advisory Committee. All activities are advertised and offered in Spanish as well as English. The State Preschool has an active Parent Advisory Committee consisting of English- and Spanish-speaking parents who meet monthly. All parents are invited to attend these meetings, and agendas for the meetings are generated through parent input and program needs. At least two individual parent/teacher conferences are held each year, and additional conferences are scheduled as needed or requested. Conferences with the program director, support staff, and/or district specialist also are held when needed or upon a parent's request.

Reno

The Reno program is fairly new and, hence, only information on the program structure is available. A key component of this program is the Family Service Coordinators. At this time, the description of their responsibilities and functions are "very fluid." These individuals are involved with "family work" or "family self-sufficiency." Initially, their work with families centers on crisis intervention, information, and referrals regarding survival needs. If necessary, they help with substance abuse and child abuse problems. In addition, they connect the parents with school staff to engage parents fully as child advocates and decisionmakers in their child's learning. The Reno project is based on the premise that the most critical factor in the educational success of children is full parental involvement. Hence, the ultimate goal of the Family Service Coordinators is to educate, assist, and empower the parents to become full partners in the education of their children.

Summary

Communication and collaboration are important goals of any transition program. Collaboration among the preschool and elementary school programs is well-established in all five programs. They conduct joint meetings, share records, and make cross-agency visits. The extent to which the family is included in each program seems to depend on the socioeconomic background of the population. In Irvine, the demographics of the population seem to allow a case-by-case approach rather than setting up an elaborate structure for communication and collaboration between the families and school. Family Advocates require substantial funding, and it seems that South Bay has not implemented such a concept due to budgetary reasons. Although recently established, the Santa Clara and Southwest programs provide an excellent model for working with both the children and their parents. Having the necessary resources, programs such as Santa Clara and Southwest have fully developed a focus on the family and are working to provide comprehensive and regular communication and collaboration through Family Advocates.

Joint Staff Development

The teachers and staff are the heart of any school. Therefore, it is crucial in a transition program to establish a systematic approach to joint staff development across age levels and across agencies to enhance implementation of all the elements of a good transition. The criteria for this element are: (a) a policy is in place supporting coordinated and ongoing staff development across age levels and among all home/school/community partners; (b) these developments cut across all the areas that impact on a successful transition such as continuity of curriculum, instruction and assessment, communication and collaboration with other staff and agencies, relations with parents, policies and procedures, and cultural and language development issues; and (c) there is a plan for the staff members to assess their own understanding and participation in transition activities on an ongoing basis. All five programs address these criteria.

Irvine

The Irvine program employs a team of bilingual teachers (Hispanic, Japanese, and Chinese) selected from a larger group of candidates, all of whom completed an intensive 300-hour preservice training course and earned 12 units from the University of California, Irvine. Six more units of internship followed or were taken concurrently with the preservice course.

A number of the teachers attended the training course again to further improve their skills in presenting the learning materials in the classrooms. The following titles of these courses convey the unique emphasis on manipulatives: Teach Literacy Skills in any Language With Manipulatives, Establish Sensorial Foundations for Reading, Math, and Cognitive Development With Manipulatives, Use Manipulatives To Achieve Motor Development, and Make Sense Out of Math With Manipulatives. Meetings are scheduled regularly among the staff. Given the cognitive and language focus of the Irvine program, the preparation and ongoing assessment of the staff are both intensive and extensive.

Santa Clara

Santa Clara considers one of the major barriers to a successful transition the lack of interagency collaboration between preschool and elementary school programs. Mutual cooperation and planning are essential to ensuring comprehensive continuity of services,

minimizing duplication of services, and identifying and responding to problems and needs. Therefore, Santa Clara has established an Interagency Administrative Committee and Interagency School Committees to plan, implement, and facilitate transition activities. Among the responsibilities of these committees are establishing clear procedures, conducting in-service orientation and training for transition staff; coordinating and presenting workshops for parents, obtaining interagency agreements, and reviewing progress and evaluating the effectiveness of the transition program.

The Santa Clara's staff development program uses the two-tiered training model developed by the Follow Through Program at the Tucson Early Education Project, University of Arizona. The purpose of the staff development is to introduce staff to the Head Start model and the concept of collaboration in the transition process, to help them identify and implement developmentally appropriate curriculum, to develop cultural sensitivity, and to acquaint them with the service providers. Kindergarten and primary teachers are encouraged to participate in staff development.

Southwest

Southwest considers staff training and professional development opportunities "essential" to the success of its project and they are supported by "substantial" personnel and financial resources. Where training opportunities do not exist, Southwest creates them in collaboration with formal and informal educational entities in the state. An examination of Southwest's July-December 1992 Timeline for the Transition Project reveals numerous planning and training sessions. For example, in August, a two-week training for Family Advocates was followed by a two-day orientation meeting for kindergarten teachers and Family Advocates. This session was followed by a training needs assessment for the Family Advocates, kindergarten teachers, and Head Start teachers. In September, numerous in-service training sessions for families and children were conducted on parent orientation, family support plans, and child transition plans. In-service training continues in October through December with home visits, monthly parent meetings, and parent workshops. Meanwhile, the Advisory Council and Transition Teams continue to meet throughout this period.

South Bay

One of the primary foci in the South Bay program is the integration and continuity of the curriculum from preschool through the entire primary grades. As mentioned earlier, South

Bay has delineated an integrated curriculum in the basic subjects for its staff. To this end, it has established curriculum articulation between kindergarten and preschool. Within the district, a primary articulation committee oversees the continuity across grades for the staff with the normal provisions of in-service, meetings, and training. Staff development consists of numerous activities such as Teacher as Artist, peer instruction, clinical instruction, High/Scope, Project A.I.M.S., ESL, and Orff-Schulwerk music. Personal and professional growth objectives are part of the process for individual assessment and understanding.

Through the Family/School Partnerships Program, the South Bay program also has a staff development component designed to promote parents as partners. These components include two-way communication, effective use of volunteers, and awareness of district and community resource and referral agencies for families.

Reno

Reno has established joint workshops for Head Start and kindergarten teachers. This linkage provides a forum for addressing and refining existing practices to better meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Workshop topics include: developmentally appropriate curriculum and practices, culturally diversified materials, and literacy for families and children. These workshops provide opportunities for both groups of teachers to better understand each other's programs and the problems encountered in the transition. Additional trainings are provided to the teachers and staff.

Summary

It appears that the mechanisms and structures are in place for Santa Clara, South Bay, Southwest, and Reno to achieve the goals and objectives pertinent to joint staff development.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Program continuity is provided through developmentally appropriate curricula, instruction, and assessment at both preschool and elementary levels. For activities to be developmentally appropriate, a child's individual level of competence must be taken into account within an age-appropriate curriculum. The criteria for this element are: (a) children are provided with an age-appropriate care/educational program; (b) learning experiences are individualized, allowing children to work at their own pace; (c) the classroom is organized into well-defined activity areas to allow child-initiated, hands-on activities and exploration in the context of cooperative, collaborative learning processes; (d) children's progress is assessed through developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive assessment practices; and (e) staff development opportunities support implementation of developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive curriculum and instruction. All five programs conform to these general criteria. However, the underline of developmentally appropriate practice and curricular emphasis of each program varies tremendously. The degree to which each of the above criteria is implemented seems to relate to many factors such as age of the program and budget resources.

Irvine

The Irvine program has a large collection of materials to provide concrete experiences to allow children to engage actively in problem solving and learning. Materials for practical activities in a home setting are provided. Examples of such materials include nine dressing frames, a shoe-polishing chest for polishing materials, and four types of brooms. Irvine also has a vast array of materials for the visual, tactile, baric, thermic, and auditive senses.

The Irvine program has an impressive collection of manipulative objects, games, and forms for the basic subjects in writing, reading, grammar, and arithmetic. The materials support a curriculum that goes as far as introducing children to sentence analysis, mathematical processes, and abstraction. There also are materials that children can play in the areas of botany, geography, and time. Musical materials include bells and bars. Because Irvine is a wealthy school district, its program enjoys a large collection of curriculum materials that allow children to experience and learn at the appropriate individual level of performance.

The Irvine program is material-driven to "a degree far beyond the usual bilingual program." This "material-driven" characteristic of the program derives from two fundamental beliefs. The first is a theory of child development based on relatively invariant motor and cognitive development sequences. The second is a theory of instruction that says practices that place a premium on the provision of materials and activities have the highest potential for facilitating each child's self-guided motor and cognitive/linguistic development. The entire curriculum of the Irvine program is organized around developmental tasks to promote individual self-development. Students are encouraged to work freely and spontaneously with any material that has been presented. Each child's interests determine the selection.

Santa Clara

The Santa Clara program implemented the High/Scope Cognitively Oriented Curriculum, which is based on a Piagetian theory of active learning, in both Head Start and the primary grades in the transition schools to ensure consistent educational experiences for the children. In the High/Scope classroom, active learning is facilitated by four main components of the approach: Room Arrangement, Daily Schedule, Plan-Do-Review, and Key Experiences. The use of this curriculum ensures developmentally appropriate practice in the classroom and improves the continuity of educational experiences and philosophy as children move from Head Start into the primary grades. The consistency of the Room Arrangement, Daily Schedule, and Plan-Do-Review process helps Head Start children make the transition into kindergarten and subsequent grades with minimal disruption. Classroom organization and activities are familiar and make sense to the children, even when the actual classroom and teacher are new.

In the Santa Clara program, extensive professional development for Transition Project teachers has played a key role in ensuring developmentally appropriate practices. Transition project teachers participate in formal training by High/Scope Foundation-certified trainers and receive ongoing follow-up and support in implementing the curriculum.

Southwest

The Head Start classes of the Southwest program derive their model from Head Start Performance Standards, developmentally appropriate practices described in the NAEYC publication, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs From*

Birth to Age 8 (Bredekamp, 1987), the High/Scope Curriculum, and accreditation criteria for the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. The Southwest program also has developed a summer activity booklet and packets of materials and activities to assist Head Start children and their families in the summer. None of the schools in the Southwest project uses standardized assessments to determine the placement of children. Instead, the Head Start program and two of the three schools are using in part or whole a Work Sampling System and a Performance-based Child Assessment Tool.

While the Head Start classes have 15-20 students, the Transition elementary classes range from 24-28 students, and have gone as high as 33. Reduction of class size continues to be a challenge in districts that face budgetary restrictions. In general, many schools face budgetary difficulties in implementing transition programs. Irvine also experienced similar problems in that only 50% of the materials for the curriculum were in place when the demand for the classes exceeded anticipated enrollment.

South Bay

The South Bay preschool staff has developed a Student Assessment Instrument, which includes both staff and parent observations as an integral part of completing a developmental profile for each student. The results of this assessment are used to determine individual developmental levels in the areas of Oral Language, Cognitive Development, Social-Emotional Development, Gross and Fine Motor Development, Self-Help/Hygiene, and Creativity. A theme-based curriculum that emphasizes discovery, cooperative learning, and a balance of child-centered versus teacher-directed activities is used in preschool and kindergarten classes. Furthermore, South Bay's integrated approach to learning offers art, music, dramatic play, social/emotional skill activities, and relaxation to facilitate the cognitive development process that includes emergent literacy, math and science knowledge, emergent writing, and oral language development.

The transition to the elementary school in South Bay is eased by a strong articulation between preschool and primary programs that stems from the development of an integrated primary curriculum. South Bay's approach creates a uniform portfolio system based on observation, parent input, and student performance that allows for the ongoing assessment and documentation of each child's progress.

Reno

The Reno program emphasizes the importance of the child's development of positive self-esteem and requisite developmental competencies. While no details are provided in the documents on the curriculum, the emphasis on "parental involvement as the foundation for the whole project" results in an individualized learning process with sensitivity to cultural diversity. The joint workshops for Head Start and kindergarten teachers include topics on developmentally appropriate and culturally diversified curricula.

Summary

All programs strive to achieve and maintain excellence with developmentally appropriate curricula. Their differences are due to priorities, resources, or socioeconomic factors such as those that distinguish Irvine from the other programs. Irvine is primarily driven by a priority on cognitive development. Santa Clara, South Bay, Southwest, and Reno have implemented extensive family focused components.

Evaluation

Documentation and reporting of program outcomes and effectiveness allow continual examination, refinement, improvement, and expansion of the program, including its redirection and modification if necessary. The criteria for this element are: (a) home, school, and community partners document processes, operations, and outcomes regarding continuity of services for children and families; (b) home, school, and community partners refine their efforts based on self-assessment and analysis of processes, operations, and outcomes; (c) policies exist that support ongoing evaluation activities; and (d) information about processes, operations, and outcomes are disseminated to decisionmakers and the broader community. Most transition evaluation data at this time document the satisfaction of participating professionals and parents.

According to Rice and O'Brien (1990), "Little research has been done addressing the necessary and sufficient conditions or procedures for successful interagency collaboration concerning transition" (p. 9). Extensive documentation for four of the five programs does not exist because they are still in their initial stages of operation. As part of a national demonstration project, plans are in place for the evaluation of the Santa Clara, Southwest, and Reno programs. An *End of Year* report is available from Irvine's program, and the documentation is extensive. A year-one report entitled *Head Start Goes to School* also is available for the Southwest program. Also, Santa Clara has produced a transition manual from its experience of an earlier transition project.

Irvine

Irvine has documented its treatment and summarized its findings together with the data collected over the initial three years of operation. Its findings are presented in terms of a two-year longitudinal analysis of Tests of Basic Experiences (TOBE) normal curve equivalent means and standard deviations. TOBE subtests in the areas of language, math, science, and social studies were used. The results were positive, with the 1988-89 project students exceeding the monolingual English-speaking students "slightly" and the 1989-90 project students exceeding the monolingual English-speaking students by a "great deal." Benefits of the program were "experienced by virtually every student."

The design of Irvine's project on bilingual education carefully follows the gap reduction evaluation model developed by the RMC Research Corporation. This model has

received the support of the U.S. Department of Education and represents the most helpful approach to evaluation of bilingual education programs since the inception of Title VII in 1968. The model basically requires data to be collected for the limited English proficient (LEP) treatment group and a monolingual English-speaking control group. The performance of the control group is used to measure the gain of LEP students. Initially, the difference or the gap is large, and over time, a successful bilingual program will see the gap diminish and eventually disappear. Irvine's program not only reduced this gap to zero, but reversed the gap in favor of the bilingual students. This success can be directly attributed to the program's curriculum.

Santa Clara

The Santa Clara project is working with the Center for Educational Planning to document and analyze the program and its effect. Information gained from case studies of Transition Project families, focus groups, and interviews with school personnel, project staff, and families will be used to supplement and extend information from other data sources.

The project has set as a major goal the dissemination of effective strategies and information related to transition to elementary school; comprehensive, school-based services; parent involvement; working with multiethnic, multilingual families; and collaboration. This will be accomplished through project newsletters, articles in a variety of publications, and presentations to Head Start, early childhood education, public school, and social service audiences.

Southwest

Southwest has published two short documents to inform the community of the project. The first addresses the questions, "What is the national evaluation?" and "What is the local evaluation?" The second is a timeline of the project for July-December 1992.

The local evaluation addresses questions of interest specific to each local project site. It involves a process evaluation to examine the basis for a successful collaboration between the public schools and the social service agencies through case studies of the three demonstration schools, including documentation of changes at these schools. It requires teachers, Family Advocates, and administrators to participate in meetings, surveys, observations, and interviews. One of the goals of the local evaluation is the production of a document that establishes a model for creating systemic change. The document can be used by others interested in using a similar approach.

South Bay

The South Bay program uses a broad-based team effort for methods of program evaluation. Program goals and objectives, curriculum and assessment practices, staff development activities, instructional practices, and parent education are evaluated formally. The results of the evaluation will be used to modify and strengthen program practices to ensure that the needs of the children and families are being met.

Staff, parents, administration, community, and board members are involved with carrying out the Exemplary Program Standards self-review process. The goal of this process is to provide a systematic review of all program goals and objectives. An ongoing evaluation of student progress and the effectiveness of curriculum and assessment practices is designed to provide student skill assessments, classroom observation, monitoring of student progress, parent conferences, and peer coaching. Results of all evaluations will be shared and discussed at staff meetings, Parent Advisory Committee meetings, and District Curriculum and Instruction Team meetings. Furthermore, the program will develop Personal/Professional Growth Objectives, which will be evaluated annually to ensure that all staff members are continually improving their knowledge and skills in working with children and their parents.

Reno

The Reno program is conducting extensive data collection at school sites. The data collection breaks into separate interview and observation components involving the children, the classrooms, the teachers, the principals, and the parents. In addition, extensive surveys were conducted in June 1993. The surveys concentrated on program and group aspects such as a program benefits survey, parent involvement survey, community survey, teacher survey, and training needs assessments. Reno has laid out a process evaluation plan for data collection, analysis, and reporting. This plan includes the time frame for data collection and the persons responsible for such activities. All these activities are regular and ongoing monthly, quarterly, or annually. The data will be evaluated, with 14 comparison schools, by a team from the University of Nevada, Reno.

Summary

Although documentation for these programs is not extensive at this time, the Santa Clara, Southwest, and Reno programs will produce documents of significant value to all who are

interested in the transition process and its outcomes because these transition programs are part of the national transition demonstration project. Thus, documentation, data analysis, assessment, and reporting are expected to be regular and ongoing. These three projects have both a local and a national evaluative component. National evaluation requires extensive data to be collected from students, parents, teachers, and principals from both demonstration and control schools. The data include assessment of student achievement, attitudes, social skills, health, and school records, parent interviews and surveys related to parenting skills, home environment, school participation, health and finance, teacher surveys regarding attitudes, assessment of student skills and school climates, and surveys of principals on school climate. Results are expected to be disseminated regularly with feedback and follow-ups.

Summary and Conclusion

There is growing concern among practitioners and many researchers specializing in early childhood that the transition between preschool and early school experiences must be improved to maintain the momentum of gains made through innovative preschool programs. An effective transition program must provide continuity, and, in addition, it must be comprehensive and ensure coordinated involvement of preschools, families, communities, and other service agencies. According to recognized authorities, a good transition program consists of at least these elements: shared leadership and decisionmaking; comprehensive and integrated services for children and their families; involvement and empowerment of families; sensitivity to home culture and home language; communication; joint staff development; and developmentally appropriate practices. The elements may overlap in some respects, but each one defines a distinct dimension of service, and all of them support the idea that continuity depends on a close partnership among home, school, and community.

The purpose of this report is to describe and illustrate some of the approaches and practices being used in five transition programs operating in the Western Region. The program elements mentioned serve as the organizing framework. The programs demonstrate several basics involved in these transition programs, including the principles that: (a) transition activities need to be ongoing and coordinated and must focus both on families and children; (b) parents need to be familiar with teachers, curriculum, and their children's development and education; and (c) communication and collaboration among different partners, including parents, facilitate transitions between educational and service settings.

Among them, the programs described have implemented a variety of practices designed to involve families in the transition activities and practices. The Southwest program has adopted the strongest family focused approach via a network to support the family and with services over and above those typically provided by the school district. Building on its years of experience, Santa Clara has implemented a complete array of family services. Reno has the goal of making the child and family full partners. South Bay and Irvine consider the role of families as an important part in the child's life. These programs instituted many measures for the involvement and empowerment of the families. Family Advocates and Family Service Coordinators provide a link among the school, home, and community service providers. They make regular home visits to families to

provide information, make referrals linking families to community resources, work with families to identify needs and obtain services, provide support to families in achieving their goals, and/or act as advocates on behalf of families.

Recognizing the home, school, and community as partners in the transition, these programs have set up an organizational structure where different members in the community share responsibilities and leadership and participate in decisionmaking through mechanisms such as Parent Advisory Committees, a Transition Advisory Council, Transition Teams, an Evaluation Advisory committee, and a Health Services Advisory Committee. While the precise organizational structure and exact composition of these committees differ slightly in each program, the general structure and membership reflect the overall goal of bringing together all the partners in the decisionmaking process. These teams or committees are composed of a transition manager, school principals, teachers, parents, Family Advocates, Head Start staff, health professionals such as nurses and pediatricians, evaluators, psychologists, and social workers. They work together to provide coordinated and integrated services to children and their families.

It has been observed that children learn best when there is consistency in their lives, including keeping children tied to their family language and culture (U.S. Department of Education, pp. 19-21, 1992). This is particularly true when children and their families hold values, beliefs, and attitudes quite different from the dominant culture. The practices in these five transition programs aim to support the culture and the home language of children. These programs have a significant number of bilingual teachers and staff. A substantial effort has been made to recruit teachers of the same ethnicity or color as the minority children. These teachers not only bring understanding and sensitivity, but also serve as role models. To ensure proper communication, translators are available for parent interviews and conferences, surveys, parent meetings, and community orientation meetings. Teachers and staff receive training on cultural sensitivity, intercultural effectiveness, and ethnic competence.

Providing children with developmentally appropriate practice—learning activities that are appropriate for all children and that match each child's level of development—establishes a foundation for continuity of education in which, when properly implemented, fosters learning in children. The Irvine program is material-driven. Children are provided with a large collection of materials to facilitate cognitive and motor development. Santa Clara and Southwest adopted the High/Scope Cognitively Oriented Curriculum—based on the Piagetian theory of active learning. South Bay implemented a theme-based curriculum and discovery activities developed by its preschool curriculum committee. Reno

emphasizes positive self-esteem and developmental competencies. As some aspects of these curricula are new and unfamiliar to the teachers, staff development is essential to the success of these programs. Workshops and training in the areas of developmentally appropriate curricula and practices are provided regularly in these programs.

Transition efforts undertaken in most of these programs are comprehensive, with different agencies such as health providers and social services collaborating with school districts. These practices reflect what leading authorities in early childhood education generally believe to be appropriate. Undertakings of such a comprehensive nature not only involve educational matters and concerns, but also social economic issues. Recognizing the complex challenges of evaluating the effectiveness of these programs, the original funding is designed to include an evaluation component. Each program is collecting a variety of data from home, school, and community partners through surveys, interviews, observations, and assessments. The results will be of value to all who are interested in this endeavor by shedding light on the ongoing evolution of practices that support transition and continuity.

Much can be learned from a continuing examination of these programs as they seek to implement and maintain practices that link early childhood programs, school programs, families, and other service providers into a comprehensive system. Although a definitive evaluation of these programs will be years away, much of the efforts in these programs are significant to our children. It is hoped that the presentation of the practices in this report will inspire other communities to work toward providing continuity of services to young children and their families and to share with each other successful practices and insights on an ongoing basis. The Appendix provides a list of the program contacts. This report is made possible as a result of the program directors sharing with the authors currently available descriptions and results, knowing that the information is sometimes incomplete and continually evolving.

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Appendix

Transition Programs

Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Project
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Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Project
Children's Services Department/Head Start
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Transition Office: Santee School
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VIP (Very Important Preschoolers) Village
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Transitional Bilingual Education Program
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